

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Karen Larimore Wilkinson, PIO
Public Information and Communications Manager
City of Salisbury
217 S. Main Street
Salisbury, North Carolina 28144
Work Phone: 704-638-2113 Cell: 704-213-1050
Home Phone: 704-633-7123
Information: <http://www.salisburync.gov>
Work Email Contact: kwilk@salisburync.gov

Over 500 Flock to Salisbury-Rowan READS! Event held at South Branch of Rowan Public Library

China Grove Site Hosts Third Event Dedicated to Reading to Children and Encouraging Use of Rowan County Library System – Over 1,550 Citizens Reached to date!

Salisbury, NC _July 29, 2009 – The City of Salisbury and Rowan County five-week summer reading enrichment program entitled, “Read to Your Child Days: Salisbury-Rowan READS!” continued this week in China Grove at the South Branch of the Rowan County Library, 920 Kimball Road. A crowd of over 500 children and adults attended the learning initiative and free-book-giveaway on Wednesday July 29, from 5 pm - 7 pm. The program, which travels to a different location in Rowan County each week, was designed to promote reading to children, encourage children to obtain a free library card, and to provide a free book to all children in attendance. The events offer free refreshments and giveaways, story-time by local government leaders, emergency service vehicle displays, games for children, and a variety of exciting door prizes. A complete Nintendo Wii System is given away each week as a grand prize.

Of the more than 500 citizens in attendance, an estimated 280 were children. Rowan Public Library Director Jeff Hall and South/East Branch Library Manager Suzanne White report that seventy-three children acquired new library cards during the festivities. China Grove Mayor Don Bringle, Kannapolis Mayor Bob Misenheimer, Landis Mayor Dennis Brown, and China Grove Town Manager Bill Pless hosted the community event. Reading sessions by government officials took place in the children’s area of the library. In addition to Bringle, Misenheimer, Brown, and Pless, Renee Goodnight from the City of Kannapolis and Rowan County Commission Chair Carl Ford also took turns reading to children during story-time. Mayor Susan Kluttz of Salisbury and Rowan County Commissioner Tina Hall were also in attendance and offered support for the event by assisting with the festivities and door prize activities.

Mayor Don Bringle of China Grove publicly thanked library staff, volunteers, government leaders and all in attendance for their outstanding support. Bringle encouraged parents to continue attending the reading events and announced the next event would be held on Wednesday, August 5 at the East Branch of the Rowan Public Library. Mayors Bringle and Brown emceed door prize activities and proclaimed five-year old Abby Lee of Salisbury as the winner of the Nintendo Wii system. Mayor Kluttz and Chairman Ford presented Abby with her new Wii. When asked if she would share the new Wii System with her younger brother, Abby smiled and quickly replied, “Yes”!

In attendance at the event were numerous emergency and rescue service providers and displays including Kannapolis Fire Department, the Kannapolis Fire Safety House, China Grove Fire Department, China Grove Rescue, Landis Fire Department, China Grove Police, Kannapolis Police, and the Kannapolis Special Response Team. Children also enjoyed a bounce house, a Rowan Express Bus display, and a Town of Landis Backhoe displayed by Landis employee Justin Stallings. Displays inside the library included "Tru" (Youth in Action against Tobacco), Project Safe Neighborhoods, Smart Start Rowan, and Rowan Recycling featuring Rowan County Recycling Coordinator Lori Swaim. Craft areas for children included face painting, tattoo art, bead working, and coloring stations.

Municipalities participating in the Salisbury-Rowan READS! Program, have proclaimed the July 15 – August 12 observance publicly during their respective municipal meetings. The five-week book giveaways will continue for three more weeks at the locations listed below. Each event takes place on a Wednesday evening from 5 pm – 7 pm. The next event will take place in the eastern part of the community, before traveling to the western vicinity for the fifth and final week:

Aug. 5: East Branch Rowan Library, *110 Broad Street, Rockwell*

Aug. 12: Cleveland Town Hall, *302 E. Main Street, Cleveland*

The City/County reading project is the result of a joint meeting held between City Council members and County Commissioners in March of this year. Through unanimous agreement, attendees approved working together to provide improvements in the community. Education was recognized as a priority and discussion was held regarding a February 2009 report by Dr. Suzanne Morse. Morse had previously addressed Salisbury City Council during the annual council retreat and reported a strong need for community support for local education. Morse, the author of *Smart Communities*, offered that children, who are not reading at the appropriate level by third grade, hold strong potential to become drop-outs by the time they reach high school. Morse offered statistical data that demonstrated the relative connection between student drop-outs and a subsequent rise in criminal activity and youth violence. During her presentation, Morse challenged the community to become more involved by supporting the Rowan-Salisbury School System and fostering support for students in the form of reading and math skills. As educational support and youth mentoring outreach are existing components of the city's established gang intervention and positive youth initiative, Salisbury City Council adopted a 2009-2010 City Council Goal, directing additional support to create opportunity for reading and math skill attainment.

During May, the combined city and county boards met with the Rowan-Salisbury School Board to discuss future plans of action and ways to provide a means of support. Reading was recognized and agreed to be of vital importance for the success of all children. Mayor Susan Kluttz, speaking on behalf of the Salisbury City Council shares, "The City of Salisbury is proud to partner with Rowan County by investing in the success of our children and striving to improve their ability to read. A love of reading is truly one of the greatest tools a child can receive and reading is a key component in ensuring a solid educational foundation for the future. Reading to a child strengthens the emotional bond between a parent and a child. Reading also helps children learn about the world in which they live and allows them to better comprehend written language." Mayor Kluttz shares that support from local municipalities has been outstanding. Kluttz contacted each mayor in Rowan County personally and explained the joint city-county venture to promote

reading and support the local school system. "The support from local government throughout Rowan County has been amazing. The towns of China Grove, Cleveland, East Spencer, Faith, Granite Quarry, Landis, Rockwell, and Spencer, along with the City of Kannapolis, have pledged their support on behalf of children. Together we hope to assist in raising youth self-esteem, strengthening family bonds, and promoting high school achievements." The Mayor acknowledges the dedicated support received from Dr. Judy Grissom, Superintendent of the Rowan-Salisbury Schools, Dr. Sarah Hensley, Director of Elementary Education, and Jeff Hall, Director of the Rowan Public Library. "This event supports our city's established gang prevention effort and provides encouragement for the development of individual reading skills. It is often said that it takes an entire village to raise a child; in Rowan County, all villages are stepping forward and partnering to assist in providing a positive future for each and every child."

Rowan County Commission Chairman Carl Ford notes, "Rowan County is pleased to join forces with the City of Salisbury to assist in promoting the importance of reading. When children are read to by an adult, their interest in reading grows and their language skills are able to develop more fully. Reading allows children to learn proper grammar and provides the ability for expressing one's self verbally. In addition, reading exposes children to new vocabulary words and by reading to a child, children are thus provided with the opportunity to hear correct pronunciation of words." Chairman Ford echoes the sentiments of Mayor Klutts in offering his appreciation to all municipalities that have pledged their support for the reading program. "I am truly proud of our local government officials and their dedication to the children throughout Rowan County. I encourage citizens to attend one of these exciting events that have been planned to positively impact the reading capabilities of children and to further enhance high school achievement."

Parents are encouraged to attend the weekly location that is most convenient. Upon arrival at the event, parents should first advance to the library card registration area set up at the entrance to the library or selected site location. At this location, Rowan Public Library staff will assist parents in registering their children for a library card. Parents are asked to please bring a drivers license for identification purposes. If children are already in possession of a library card, the card will need to be presented at the time of registration. Parents should register all children in attendance to be eligible for door prizes drawings. Once registered, children will receive a hand-stamp to denote that the registration process has been completed. A designated free book area will offer titles separated into categories by age and reading level. Children will proceed to the free book area and display their hand-stamp to receive a free book with the title of choice. Parents and guardians are asked to please assist children with their book selection. Children will receive plastic bags for carrying books and for collecting additional free giveaways to be distributed through on-site booths and displays.

Beginning at 5:15 pm, children's story-time sessions will take place every fifteen minutes. Parents and children will receive a schedule of reading sessions during the initial library card registration process. Each story will be read to children by a mayor, council member, county commissioner, town board member, or municipal manager. Parents are asked to please join children during story-time sessions and to remain with their children at all times. Announcements will be conducted outside of the library via a P.A. system to alert parents and children when story-times are ready to commence.

Parents and children will have opportunity to visit numerous displays in between story-

time sessions. Local city and county departments will man booths and provide information and free giveaways to children in attendance. Emergency vehicles will be on display and citizens are welcome to interact with station attendees to learn more about these vehicles and the services they provide. Citizens will have opportunity to participate in free game activities and free refreshments will be provided.

Numerous door prizes will be offered at the conclusion of the event each week. Door prize registration will take place during the initial phase of library card registration for children. Children, preschool age through students entering grade 12, are eligible for door prizes. A grand prize of a Nintendo Wii System, valued at \$249, will be given away each week of the five-week program. Door prize drawings will be held at 7 pm and prizes will be awarded to children and students only. Adults are not eligible for door prizes. Children must be present at the time of the drawing to claim any door prize.

Rowan County is made up of nineteen departments that are committed to providing a wealth of services to County residents and businesses. For more information regarding Rowan County local government, please visit www.rowancountync.gov on the World Wide Web. The City of Salisbury is an equal opportunity employer with over 180 different job classifications and 400 full time positions. For more information regarding the City of Salisbury and its services and departments, please visit us on the web at www.salisburync.gov.

###